

Dalton Herbert House
(Wise's Tavern)
Cameron + Fairfax Sts.
Alexandria, Virginia

HABS No. VA 934

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7-ALEX,
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Washington, D.C.

Historic American Buildings Survey
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Anne Lee Memorial Home (Wise Tavern)
200 North Fairfax Street
Alexandria, Virginia

This was a pair of mid-eighteenth century brick town houses, thrown together and drastically altered about 1800. The original plan of the northern house is not entirely clear, as it seems to have been L shaped with a room at the north end on the street, a stairhall to the south and a wing room to the east. The southern house was apparently the orthodox city plan, with a stairhall on the north, two large rooms facing south on Cameron Street, and a room at the rear of the stairhall. There is one mid-18th century paneled window frame in the east wing room of the north house. All other windows had trim (mostly with paneled reveals) of the period of c. 1800 with doors and mantels to match, none of which was noteworthy.

The most interesting feature of the house is the north stair which is of the early period. It ascends in a long flight against the south wall, then turns in a short flight at the east end, and finishes in a longer flight toward the west. It has an open string with scrolled brackets uncarved but pierced like strapwork. The balusters are turned, with tall shafts above short bases. The handrail is well moulded and carries in ramps and easings over the posts. The rail at the short flight at the east end has the curious feature of an ogee ramp instead of a concave one, and the paneled dado follows this profile. The minor posts are turned as was probably the newel, which is now replaced by a Victorian one.

The exterior shows the marks of the alterations in spite of the grey paint over the brickwork. Portions of a double moulded water table exist, but the string courses at the second and third floor have been cut back. The windows seem to be the original size, and are rather small with flat arches. The wood cornice is of the later period, and has widely spaced modillion blocks.

. It can be seen that the north end of the building was extended beyond the original line. It is probable that the alterations took place when Fairfax Street was regraded about 1792. Probably at this time a door from the southwest room to Cameron Street was closed up. Its location can be seen in the brickwork.

Thomas T. Waterman
October 26, 1944

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